Report to the Yukon Public on the

Primary Health Care Planning Forum

For many Canadians,
health care is the number one priority.

Yukoners are no different.

What is the primary health care transition fund?

The Primary Health Care Transition Fund was established by the federal government to support changes to primary health care initiatives across the country.

Over the next 30 months, the Yukon will receive $4.5 million.

Approximately $2.5 million of the funding has already been committed to planning and coordination of activities, improvements to information technology in Client Registry, Drug Programs, Mental Health and Public Health. Funding was also provided for changes to Alcohol and Drug Services. As well, funding has been provided to non-government organizations to co-ordinate Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder prevention, and early diagnosis and intervention.

Additional funding is covering the cost of feasibility studies for multi-level care facilities in Dawson City and Watson Lake.

The May 2003 Primary Health Care Planning Forum was paid for out of the federal government's Primary Health Care Transition Fund and all activities must conform to their guidelines.

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In May 2003, the Department of Health and Social Services brought together 100 delegates from across the Yukon for two days of talks about priorities for primary health care in the territory. These people represented government, non-government agencies and organizations, direct service providers, and members of the public. All had one common goal – to recommend changes to improve health care in the Yukon.

By the end of those two days, the delegates had created a list of priorities, ideas and action items for the Primary Health Care Transition Fund which is administered by the Primary Health Care Transition team. Many of the ideas and action items that they identified fit within six separate and distinct priority areas.

Alcohol and drug treatment was identified through a number of recommendations at the forum, as well as in the environmental scan and other meetings. Although statistics do not provide a complete picture of alcohol and drug abuse in the Yukon, this is still seen as one of the main health issues facing Yukoners. People also want to be informed about the addiction treatment supports that currently exist in the territory.

The development of a **chronic disease strategy** was also identified at the forum, and through the environmental scan that preceded it, as something of great concern to Yukon residents. Issues were raised about a number of chronic diseases including diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, cancer and HIV/AIDS. The call to create a strategy for dealing with chronic diseases focused on important health issues in several areas:

Priority areas

- alcohol and drug treatment
- healthy living
- more information about health issues and programs
- chronic disease strategy
- cooperation and collaboration
- health blueprint

prevention, early diagnosis, intervention, treatment, self-management and rehabilitation.

Several recommendations also called for **more information about health issues and programs**. People wanted ways to help manage their own care, including current and reliable information on their health conditions, and health and social services programs.

Healthy living was another strong theme that emerged from the forum. There was great interest in promoting wellness among Yukoners and supporting individuals, families and communities in getting healthier.

Another strong focus was **cooperation and collaboration** – improving our ability to work together within the health and social services community and other sectors. Forum participants believe that by working together, we will strengthen our health care system. They recommended that professionals share case information to coordinate care for individuals. They also want programs that work together to avoid duplication of services and identify gaps.

Forum participants recommended that a **health blueprint** be developed. This blueprint would be a plan to guide health care service in the long term. Several of the priority areas identified would fit into such a plan, including emphasizing healthy living and improving cooperation and collaboration. Actions taken over the course of the Primary Health Care Transition Fund will add to this incrementally. A health blueprint would increase self-reliance and cooperation and collaboration among sectors and promote healthy living.

Since the forum

The Primary Health Care Transition team has taken the priority areas and action items recommended at the forum and begun to create an implementation plan, building on the recommendations from the forum.

The Primary Health Care Transition team listened to the invaluable input from participants to determine priority areas and the action items that could be undertaken to support each of them. The following pages outline the immediate action items that the Department of Health and Social Services is undertaking to support the priority areas selected by forum participants.

Immediate action projects and next steps

1.

Inform the public about the programs and services at Alcohol and Drug Services.

This action item meets the priority of providing more information about health issues and programs.

Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) provides alcohol and drug treatment services, and supports the efforts of community groups and First Nations to prevent and reduce substance abuse. ADS will increase public awareness about alcohol and drug services available. This will help individuals, families and communities access the resources they need to be healthier. It is a step towards addressing alcohol and drug abuse, which is seen as one of the main health issues in the Yukon.

Next steps: Direct future activities to groups which are particularly at risk for alcohol and drug abuse.

2.

Research the need for permanent, continuous, live-in alcohol and drug treatment services in the Yukon.

This action meets the priorities of alcohol and drug treatment, and cooperation and collaboration.

Currently, live-in treatment services are provided several times a year. The Primary Health Care Transition team will undertake a feasibility study focussing specifically on the need for alcohol and drug treatment services available on a continuous basis, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, year-round.

Next steps: Develop options based on the outcome of the feasibility study.

3.

Provide Yukon families with a resource book called "Do I need to see the doctor/nurse?"

This action meets the priority of providing more information about health issues and programs.

This book will provide very clear information to people who are dealing with acute health problems. Its simple format will help a person decide if they can deal with a health issue at home, or if they need to seek help from a health professional. The book will help increase self-reliance for families and individuals.

Next steps: Evaluate the usefulness of the book, in part, by studying how emergency health services are used in Whitehorse and Yukon communities before and after distribution of the book. (See Action 8.) Over time, we will determine whether having such information makes a difference in the use of emergency health care in the hospital and in the communities.

The Department of Health and Social Services is also exploring ways to make additional health information available to Yukoners. For instance, this could include a more comprehensive health guide, like the B.C. Health Guide, access to web-based information and a nurse information line.

4.

Support the Active Living Program.

This action meets the priorities of healthy living and providing more information about health issues and programs.

The Active Living Program supports Yukoners to become healthier through increasing physical activity. The program promotes community participation, helps develop the capacity to achieve health, and contributes to the prevention of chronic disease.

The Primary Health Care Transition Fund will provide funding to the Active Living Program so it can continue until March 2006. This will enable the Department of Health and Social Services to work in partnership with Active Living to complete a good assessment of the program and permit time to seek more stable funding for the long term.

Next steps: Actively explore additional opportunities to work with community groups to enhance the ability of Yukoners to live a health life.

5.

Conduct an awareness and education campaign on parenting skills.

This action meets the priorities of providing more information about health issues and programs, alcohol and drug strategy planning, healthy living, and cooperation and collaboration.

Education and public awareness will contribute to the development of parenting skills and community support for children and families. Public information and education materials will focus particularly on avoiding the child neglect associated with alcohol and drug abuse.

Alcohol and Drug Services, Child Abuse Treatment Services, Healthy Families and others will work together to prepare the materials for the education campaign. This campaign will strengthen the capacity of families and communities to keep children safe and healthy today. Positive early childhood experiences have powerful benefits for health in later life.

Next steps: Explore further opportunities to support healthy family living.

6.

Support the Interdepartmental Collaboration Initiative among the departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Social Services.

This action meets the priority of cooperation and collaboration across sectors.

Work is already underway on this project, with support from the Primary Health Care Transition Fund team. This project is intended to improve services to families which need sustained and integrated support from all three departments in order to function well. A focus will be to improve working relationships and reduce barriers to information sharing when it would meet the best interests of the client's care.

Next steps: Provide education and policy support to collaborative initiatives that can be sustained.

7.

Develop information sharing protocols to improve case management.

This action meets the priority of cooperation and collaboration.

In order to share information between health workers and with family members about individuals receiving care, there must be mutual understanding about what information can be shared and under what circumstances. This is one way to improve the coordination of care for individuals. Although case management can be improved by appropriate information sharing, respect for people's privacy must be assured.

Protocols for information sharing and the protection of privacy will be the basis of shared care and case management. They will be the tools that health workers use when communicating with other health workers about case management. Different professions and programs have different approaches to sharing information and this must be taken into consideration when developing protocols. It will be important to have a mutual understanding among workers in different programs about these differences and the reasons for them.

Next steps: Implement protocols through awareness and educational activities with health workers.

8.

Review use of emergency services in Whitehorse and the communities.

This action will be a foundation for meeting the identified priority of improving cooperation and collaboration, and providing more information about health issues and programs. As such, it will be part of the health blueprint.

An Ambulatory Care Reporting System will be introduced at Whitehorse General Hospital to track information on why people are using emergency services. These reasons can include accidents and injuries, problems related to alcohol and drug use and abuse, chronic disease, mental health, and other health issues.

With an understanding of how and why people use emergency services, the Primary Health Care Transition team will determine the best use of emergency health care services and what kinds of changes will improve these services. This will allow enhanced coordination and continuity of care for people who use emergency services to deal with chronic disease, mental health, alcohol and drug abuse conditions or other health problems.

The study will provide baseline information to use in determining if future outcomes change as programs and service changes.

A similar project will be undertaken for emergency and ambulatory services provided by community nurses outside Whitehorse.

Next steps: This project provides a basis for determining whether both emergency and non-emergency health services can be offered in a better way. Use this basic information to guide action on disease and injury prevention, and chronic disease management.

What lies ahead

These immediate actions are a start towards making changes that are important and useful for Yukoners. However, this is not the end. The Primary Health Care Transition team will look for additional opportunities to support actions that improve and sustain the Yukon primary health care system.

Through the Primary Health Care Transition team, the Department of Health and Social Services will work with community organizations, other departments within the Yukon government, and other governments to implement projects consistent with the primary health care objectives. The team will draw on recommendations from the two-day forum, the findings of the environmental scan, and research evidence to identify opportunities for further action.

In order to make sure that actions continue to address the priorities identified by the forum participants, the Primary Health Care Transition team has created a list of implementation objectives to use in deciding what future initiatives to undertake. All of these objectives support the work done by Yukoners at the forum.

Any future actions or initiatives funded by the Primary Health Transition Fund must meet one or both of these broad objectives:

- Increase the emphasis on health promotion, disease and injury prevention, and management of chronic disease.
- Facilitate coordination and integration of health services.

In addition, new actions must meet one of these implementation objectives:

- Address the main health issues, including alcohol and drug abuse, and chronic disease, with a focus on reducing health inequities.
- Increase self-reliance and ability to achieve health by fostering health development and wellness.
- Promote community participation to make full use of all Yukon resources.
- Sustain integrated referral systems to support coordination.
- Reduce and/or eliminate barriers to health promotion, disease and injury prevention, treatment and rehabilitation to ensure accessibility.
- Educate health workers socially and technically to prepare them to work as a health team to respond to community health needs.

improve the health of Yukon residents by

strengthening health care.

For more information, contact the
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Yukon
Health and Social Services